

ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

Published under the auspices of the : World Council of Churches · International Missionary Council
World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations · World Young Women's Christian Association
World's Student Christian Federation · World Council of Christian Education · United Bible Societies

EDITOR : JOHN GARRETT · 17 ROUTE DE MALAGNOU · GENEVA · SWITZERLAND
TEL. 36 71 30 · CABLES OIKOUMENE U.S. ENQUIRIES: WCC, 156 FIFTH AVE. NEW YORK 10 : TEL. WATKINS 4-8551

No. 23/26th Year

June 12th, 1959.

On Other Pages

US Churches Plan Year-Long Peace Programme	Page 2
1,000 Attend Church Rally in East Germany	Page 3
Protestant Radio Programme Banned in Trieste	Page 3
Dr. de Blank Calls Conference on Racial Cooperation	Page 4
German Youth Respond to Work Camp Appeal	Page 5
CWS Sends Relief Supplies to Cuba	Page 5
YMCA Sets Up Recreation Centre for Tibetan Refugees	Page 6
Hungarian Seminaries to Add "Study of Society" to Curricula	Page 8
Calvin's University Celebrates 400th Anniversary	Page 8
Roman Catholic Authors Discuss US Protestant Relations	Page 8

International Agencies Appeal for Refugee Year Support

(Geneva) - A worldwide appeal to accept, as "the most serious moral obligation of this generation", the responsibility for helping the world's 45,000,000 refugees has been issued here by the International Committee for World Refugee Year.

Dr. Elfan Rees, internationally recognized authority on refugee problems, declared that "history has placed upon the men and women of this generation who themselves have been spared the ordeal of being uprooted and dispossessed, the binding responsibility to care for the world's homeless".

Dr. Rees made the appeal as chairman of the International Committee, an association of 50 international voluntary agencies concerned with the refugee problem. He is the permanent representative in Europe and Advisor for Refugee Affairs of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, a joint agency of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council.

Dr. Rees announced that in support of the special United Nations sponsored year, tens of millions of worshippers of different faiths and creeds will pray for its success at religious services to be held during the week-end of June 26 - 28.

The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian Movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items. EPS may be freely reproduced in any form with acknowledgment.

Describing the proposed crusade as "one of the greatest single acts of united universal prayer in the history of mankind", he said prayers will be offered by the world's Protestants, Roman Catholics and Jews. He said it is also hoped that appeals for prayers will be made by the Dalai Lama to Buddhists and by the Aga Khan and the Ministers of the Interior in some nine different countries to the world's Muslims.

Dr. Rees emphasized that the International Committee, which represents the greatest number of voluntary agencies ever to unite in a single cause, is concerned with "all refugees - everywhere", particularly those who do not come under the UN High Commissioner's mandate, "since those who do, have at least some protection".

He describes the committee as "an expression of the social conscience of civilized people" and said one of its basic aims will be to bring the plight of the refugee to the attention of the world community and help translate the feeling of "wanting to do something" into practical terms.

He said the committee will seek to do this by sharing the firsthand knowledge of its member organizations about refugees and aiding wherever possible in the establishment of national committees for the Year. He noted that less than half of the 59 nations who voted support for the Year have actually moved towards setting up programmes.

Dr. Rees released up-to-date figures on the number of the world's refugees. There are in the world at the moment, he reported, about 45,000,000 refugees. This figure includes more than 27,500,000 in Asia, another 18,000,000 plus in Europe and 170,000 in Africa. He said the figure represents as many people as inhabit all of France, or the German Federal Republic or the United Kingdom.

EPS, Geneva

US Churches Plan Year-Long Peace Programme

(Seattle) - US churches will conduct a year-long programme of education and action for world peace beginning on July 1.

The project will be undertaken by four commissions of the Department of International Affairs of the National Council of Churches in cooperation with the social action units of its 32 constituent denominations representing 38,000,000 communicants in 144,000 local churches.

Plans for the project were announced here at a session of the NCC's policy-making General Board by Dr. R.H. Edwin Espy, associate general secretary. Dr. Espy said the programme will be concerned with four subjects: power struggle and security in a nuclear age, overseas areas of rapid social change, changing dimensions of human rights, and international institutions and peaceful changes.

He said special consideration will also be given to the message of the Fifth World Order Study Conference in November which included the controversial proposal that the US and UN recognize Red China.

At another session Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, a former NCC president, noted that the proposal was "clearly not a policy statement of the council, but is rather designed to make the American people study the Far Eastern policy of our nation in the light of their Christian convictions".

Dr. Blake stressed that although the conference was sponsored by the Council's Department of International Affairs, "up to this point, the Council has made no such recommendations". Dr. Blake, who is stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, was NCC president from 1954 - 1957. EPS, Geneva

1,000 Attend Church Rally in East Germany

(Berlin) - More than 1,000 pastors and laity from 35 church districts in the Kurmark area in East Germany attended the recent six-day Kirchentag (Church Day) observances, it has been reported here.

Church Superintendent Walther Braun, of Potsdam, in the main address, told his audience that a missionary church requires something more than freedom of worship. "Christians", he declared, "want freedom for the whole life of the Church. They want to cooperate as citizens with equal rights without detriment to their conscience."

He added that while he "welcomed" the fact that conversations between state and Church "seem to be on the horizon, repeated representations to the state authorities by the Church have not yet succeeded in clearing certain questions".

Bishop Johannes Jänicke of Magdeburg, preaching at a special service of worship, appealed to his congregation "to live, to praise and to suffer" as a Church of Christ. He said, "faith does not spring from human hearts and minds. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit."

Bishop Otto Dibelius, Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg, was unable to attend the Kurmark Kirchentag, it was learned, because authorities continue to refuse to grant him a visa for Eastern Germany.

The annual Kurmark Kirchentag is one of the major church rallies held in East Germany. The major Kirchentag observance will be held from August 12 - 16 at Munich with an anticipated attendance of several thousand laity and church leaders from around the world. EPS, Geneva

Protestant Radio Programme Banned in Trieste

(Geneva) - Authorities of the Italian Waldensian (Protestant) Church have been notified that the weekly Sunday morning radio programmes of Protestant worship broadcast from Trieste will no longer be permitted, it has been learned in Geneva.

At the same time, the church has been told that the time of the broadcast of its weekly service of worship from Rome has been changed from 7.30 a.m. to 7.15 a.m.

Dr Ermanno Rostan, moderator of the Waldensian Church, reported to World Council of Churches officials, that "the reasons given were simply stated to be technical".

He said the church had received no further explanation of the changes in response to letters asking for details. He said a request that the Rome broadcast, if it must be changed, be scheduled later in the day, had also been refused. EPS, Geneva

Dr. de Blank Calls Conference on Racial Cooperation

(Capetown) - Dr. Joost de Blank, Anglican Archbishop of Capetown, and a leading opponent of apartheid, has called a private conference for August 1 in Capetown to discuss the basis of cooperation between the races of South Africa.

The invitation to attend the conference, sent by Dr. de Blank in the form of a circular letter to "selected individuals and organizations", reads in part:

"My own conviction is strengthened by discussions I have had with a number of people of widely different standings in the last weeks, and I therefore believe, given strong nerves, we can soon effect important changes in the political as well as the social spheres in this country."

"Now is the time for the moral forces of the country to combine to bring a new policy of justice and cooperation to birth. I have ventured to take the responsibility for calling this conference upon myself because, apart from my commitment to the Christian faith and the Christian Church, I have no commitments to any political party, ideological organization or social group."

Quotes from the letter published by "Die Burger", an Afrikaans and pro-government newspaper, under the headline "Dr. de Blank Now Wants to Start a New Party" were reported to have caused "a sensation" in religious and political circles.

Anglican authorities immediately issued vigorous denials that Dr. de Blank intends to start a new political party. They were also said to be "greatly disturbed" that news of the conference had leaked to nationalist newspaper sources.

Dr. de Blank, who was absent from the city at the time "Die Burger" printed the story, was expected to release further information about the meeting on his return.

EPS, Geneva

Australian Church Leaders Protest Against New Guinea Court Decision

(Sydney)-The sentence given a New Guinea farmer who was set free after being fined the equivalent of \$420 for killing an indigenous employee, has been strongly criticized by Protestant leaders here.


A statement by the interdenominational National Missionary Council, declared that Australia "is on trial before the world as the custodian and promoter of the destiny of the New Guinea people".

Dr. Alan Walker, superintendent of the Sydney Central Methodist Mission, said that Christians are "deeply disturbed" over the sentence and warned that by failing to control racial bias Australia is "sowing a harvest of bitterness and hatred in the years ahead".

The Supreme Court Judge of the Australian territory of New Guinea who fined the farmer said that if he had jailed him, the prisoner would have been forced to serve the sentence in Australia and would automatically have been forbidden to re-enter New Guinea.

The Missionary Council said it regarded these reasons as "dangerous" because they seem to imply "preferential treatment for a white man simply because he is a white man".

EPS, Geneva



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

German Youth Respond to Work Camp Appeal

(Berlin) - Youth in both East and West Germany have responded in "surprising numbers" to an appeal to take part in work camp projects in countries occupied by Germany in World War II.

The number is large enough to staff a total of four camps and additional applications are expected, the Synod of the Evangelical Church of Germany reports. However, it was indicated, there is little likelihood that youth from East Berlin or the East Zone will be permitted to take part. Fourteen youth from the East who had applied to work in the camps several months ago are still waiting to receive exit permits from the German Democratic Republic.

The appeal for "Operation Atonement" was issued last year by Dr. Lothar Kreyssig, Synod president, in a message calling upon German youth to "contribute towards reconciliation, reconstruction and international understanding in countries formerly occupied by Germany".

One camp was reported already underway at Ouddorp, in the Netherlands where youth are building a convalescent and holiday home for Dutch workers' families. Church officials are also consulting government officials in Russia, Czechoslovakia, Norway and Israel with a view to setting up camps in these countries.

EPS, Geneva

American Presbyterians Denounce Segregation "Devices"

(Indianapolis) - The United Presbyterian Church in the USA has condemned legislative "devices" which interfere with racial desegregation in the United States as being "as ungodly as they are unconstitutional".

It warned that such "devices can tomorrow be directed against any legitimate cause, even religious liberty", and called upon its 3,000,000 members "not to support or tolerate assaults on the God-given and constitutionally guaranteed rights of all citizens with the mistaken belief they are merely defending a racial arrangement they happen to prefer".

The appeal was made in a report approved by 1,000 delegates at final sessions here of the Church's annual General Assembly.

In other action delegates endorsed birth control by married couples as a means of "voluntary family planning and responsible parenthood" and approved a report calling for the abolition of capital punishment, noting that the death penalty "has no observable effect on homicide rates". They also heard an announcement that a 16½ acre site has been acquired in Washington, D.C., for a new National Presbyterian Church for the new denomination. The church was formed last year by the merger of the Presbyterian Church in the USA and the United Presbyterian Church of North America.

EPS, Geneva

CWS Sends Relief Supplies to Cuba

(New York) - A stepped-up relief programme in Cuba has been undertaken by Church World Service after an agency representative's eye-witness report that more than 50,000 persons are living after the revolt in ruins with no food, clothing or work.

The agency has announced it is sending one million multi-vitamins, 20,000 lbs. of cottonseed oil, and clothing, and has also cabled \$5,000 to aid the needy.

A ten-day survey of conditions in the remote areas in North and South Oriente was made by the Rev. Frank L. Hutchinson, CWS Overseas Programme director.

"We saw 1,400 refugees from one town, which had been deliberately burned by Batista forces, living in crumbling army barracks and shacks", he said. "No one had work, as cane cutting is over, and no relief supplies had been sent them." He added that even in Havana few people were aware of the gravity of the situation.

"In the port of Gilbara", he said, "are 8,000 people who need everything - clothing and food especially". Similar conditions exist in towns throughout the areas visited, he reported.

In addition to CWS aid, Mr. Hutchinson said, the Havana churches in the Cuban Evangelical Council have sent clothing and the Ministerial Association, denominational and local government leaders are doing what they can.

Agency officials said that they also plan to send US government surplus powdered milk and corn meal, but that funds are urgently needed now to purchase and ship staple foods "as it will be several months before these supplies can get there". The agency had sent clothing to Cuba following the victory of Castro forces last January. Church World Service is the refugee relief wing of the National Council of Churches. EPS, Geneva

East German Pastors Send Message to Geneva Delegation

(Berlin) - The Federation of Evangelical Pastors, formed in East Germany last year, has sent a request to the East Germany delegation to the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference urging them "to use all your influence to prevent the concerns of the churches in our republic from being misused as the object of political interests, and to prevent misunderstanding".

The association, which was formed without the cooperation of official church authorities (see EPS No. 8), is made up of about fifty pastors from parishes in East Germany. It has announced that its main task is to deal with "questions of theological and political life affecting pastors in the German Democratic Republic".

A speaker at a recent Association conference attended by some 100 pastors and their wives is reported to have described it as "the logic of history" that Communists and Christians should cooperate in joint action for the maintenance of peace. Other speakers were said to have expressed "approval of Socialism as a just and humane order of society". EPS, Geneva

YMCA Sets Up Recreation Centre for Tibetan Refugees

(Geneva) - The Indian YMCA has set up a recreational programme for 7,000 Tibetan refugees in a camp in Misamari, India, located 14 miles from a reception centre for refugees coming across the border.

News of the new programme has been reported to the Geneva office of the World Alliance of YMCAs here by David Malaiperuman, National General Secretary

of the Indian YMCA.

He said the programme was undertaken at the request of the Indian Government following conferences of "Y" officials with government and camp officials and with representatives of Protestant and Catholic relief organizations.

The programme is housed in one of the camp huts and is at present being staffed by two members on loan from the YMCA staff in Calcutta. A third staff member, a physical education instructor, is scheduled to join the staff in the near future. Sports equipment, indoor games and a phonograph have also been sent to the centre by the Indian "Y".

Mr. Malaiperuman, noted that while "there was no question that the Indian YMCA should not respond to the government appeal, it is a heavy unforeseen drain upon our resources". Agency officials here said that the sum of \$500 had been sent to the Indian "Y" following "emergency consultatio" and appealed to national YMCA movements to help support future expenses of the new programme. EPS, Geneva

German Church Leaders Re-confirm Barmen Declaration

(Wuppertal, Germany) - German church leaders meeting here have unanimously re-confirmed as "just as significant today" a declaration made by their predecessors twenty-five years ago that there are "divinely defined limits" to the power of a totalitarian state.

The occasion was a week-long Bible emphasis week marking the 25th anniversary of the German Confessing Church Synod, which was concluded by the historic Barmen Theological Declaration containing the warning to totalitarian governments.

Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin-Brandenburg, in a comparison of conditions now and at the time the declaration was framed, noted that "like the National Socialist (Nazi) state, the Communist state by its very nature cannot tolerate the fact that Christians take their criteria of right and wrong from the Gospels and not from state ideology".

"Christians must always defend themselves with all their might when a state government lays down rules to govern what a man should believe", he declared.

Dr. Joachim Beckmann, president of the Church of the Rhineland, stressed that "the church must still oppose the state's propensity to increase its power everywhere, not only on the other side of the Iron Curtain".

Bible study during the week was devoted to the same theme studied at the first Synod meeting - "The Church Before the Judge", and was conducted by church leaders who had participated in the earlier meeting.

A statement at the conclusion of the anniversary week by the church congregation here which organized plans for the week noted that it had been "no celebration of victory over our deeds, no extolling of our resistance (to the Nazi government), no celebration of persons, but simply a testimony to God's great work for his people".

EPS, Geneva

Hungarian Seminaries to Add "Study of Society" to Curricula

(Budapest) - Courses in the "study of society" will be added to the curricula of the theological academies of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Budapest and Debreczen, according to an article in the church paper "Reformatusok Lapja".

It said that the courses will include study of "the fundamental laws of Marxist sociology" and questions concerned with "the construction of socialism as it effects pastoral work".

The article reported the decision to add the courses was made at a joint meeting of members of the governing boards of the two academies. It quoted Dean Czegledy of the Budapest academy to the effect that the new courses "will provide those who have responsibility for pastoral care with more knowledge of the social structure of the world in which their duties will be performed".

EPS, Geneva

Calvin's University Celebrates 400th Anniversary

(Geneva) - Church leaders have been prominent in celebrations to mark the four hundredth year of the University of Geneva of Geneva, founded by John Calvin.

At a solemn service in Geneva's Cathedral of St. Pierre on June 3 Pastor Marc Boegner, president of the French Protestant Federation, preached on gratitude. The service also marked the end of the preceding church celebrations (see EPS No. 22). Pastor Boegner said it was significant that after four hundred years the church and university could give thanks together. Both, he said, served the cause of truth. He called the congregation to translate its gratitude into actions.

Professor Jaques Courvoisier of the university's theological faculty, took a leading part in public events as rector for the jubilee year. At the award of 24 honorary doctorates recipients included four well-known church leaders from abroad; Professor Karl Barth of Basel, Professor Jean-Daniel Benoît of Strasbourg, Dean Liston Pope of the Divinity School of Yale, New Haven, USA, and Professor Thomas F. Torrance of Edinburgh.

EPS, Geneva

Roman Catholic Authors Discuss US Protestant Relations

(New York) - Three "outstanding Roman Catholic" authors discuss their view of contemporary Roman Catholic/Protestant relations in the United States in articles published in the June 8 issue of "Christianity and Crisis", an independent Protestant "Journal of Opinion".

Dr. John C. Bennett, professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and a co-chairman of the journal, in an introduction notes that "Christianity and Crisis" has given "considerable attention for several years to the problems of Protestant/Catholic relations", but that most of the articles and editorials on the subject have been written by Protestants.

"It now seems appropriate to have the views of Roman Catholics at first hand", he writes, and says that the authors "have written frankly about how Protestantism appears to them, about sources of tensions and about their experience, as Catholics, of American institutions".

The authors and their titles are: Gustave Weigel, S.J., "Inside American Roman Catholicism"; Thomas F. O'Dea, "The Ideologists and the Missing Dialogue"; and William Clancy, "A Roman Catholic View of American Protestantism". EPS, Geneva

In Brief

Karoly Olt, a member of the Hungarian Presidential Council, has been named director of the State Office for Church Affairs, according to a government announcement. He succeeds Janos Horvath who held the position for the past seven years and has been "transferred to another post". Mr. Olt, 55, has been a Communist Party member for 30 years. He was at one time Minister of Social Welfare and later Minister of Finance, an office held until the revolt of October, 1956. He is also a former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

* *

Six Australian Protestant clergymen propose to make a three-week visit to Russia and Communist China to make "an impartial investigation into the condition of the Christian Churches". The group will include two members each from the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church and the Church of Christ in Australia.

* *

Dr. Charles T. Leber, general secretary of the United Presbyterian Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, has been made a Knight of the Legion of Honour by President Charles de Gaulle of France for initiating exchange of fraternal religious workers between that country and the United States.

* *

Billy Graham drew a total attendance estimated at 3,250,000 during his recent four-month crusade in Australia and New Zealand, according to campaign officials. They said 142,000 persons made "decisions for Christ".

* *

The complete Bible or portions of it has now been translated into 1,136 tongues, according to the American Bible Society. However, there are still more than 1,000 languages and dialects into which the Bible has not been translated, it said. A report to the agency's 143rd annual meeting held recently in New York noted that in 1958, 16,629,486 copies of the Scriptures in 201 languages were distributed throughout the world. Of these 9,188,978 were complete Bibles.

EPS, Geneva

